

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 18, 2014

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs
810 Vermont Ave, N.W.
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki,

We write to you today regarding the failure of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to diligently and expeditiously implement the Open Air Burn Pit Registry as mandated under Section 201 of Public Law 112-260.

As you know from previous correspondence on this matter, the Open Air Burn Pit Registry was designed to identify and monitor veterans who had served in Iraq and Afghanistan and who were exposed to toxic pollutants released by open air burn pits. When President Obama signed PL 112-260 into law on January 10, 2013, it provided the VA one year to develop, implement, and maintain this registry. While the necessity for some delay is understandable, the VA has failed to adequately explain why the delay has occurred, which steps remain to be completed before the registry is available for the use of our veterans, and provide specific information on when the registry is expected to be completed.

This delay is deeply concerning, particularly when similar registries exist within the United States government. The lack of urgency and communication from the VA is even more troubling. Our veterans, Congress, and the public deserve to know why the Open Air Burn Pit Registry has been delayed and when it will be completed. Furthermore, the VA has failed to develop the Open Air Burn Pit Registry after multiple congressional inquiries and letters calling for its timely creation and has not provided detailed information regarding the nature of the delay to Congressional offices who have requested such information.

In an effort to address this failure, we ask that you provide Congress with information on the current status of the Open Air Burn Pit Registry, an accounting of problems that have arisen during the development of the registry, detailed information on remaining benchmarks to be completed before the Open Air Burn Pit Registry will become fully operational, and any information on how Congress can help to expedite the implementation of this critical program. We remain concerned about VA's implementation of this program and we urge you to diligently complete the Open Air Burn Pit Registry.

Thank you for your timely response to this matter and your continued service to our nation.

Sincerely,



Bob Corker
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator